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SUBJECT: AFI PROTESTS: ANGST IN THE RANKS

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Classified By: Classified by Charles V. Barclay, Political Counselor for reasons 1.4 (b) (d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Last week's protests by elements of Mexico's Federal Investigative Agency (AFI) -- which sparked the subsequent takeover of AFI headquarters by SSP's Federal Police in the early morning of September 26 -- stem from widespread anxiety among rank and file investigative police over plans to meld them into a single unit under the command of the country's Public Security Secretariat (SSP), say post law enforcement contacts. Sporadic protests by AFI agents -- including a march on Mexico's Senate by close to 200 agents on September 30 -- continue this week. No/no direct clashes between SSP and PGR elements have been reported, but AFI nerves are frayed by the protracted effort to consolidate investigative powers into the SSP, which is coming to a head this fall as Mexico's Congress begins to debate legislation to finalize the move.

¶2. (U) The protesters are AFI investigative agents who have remained under the control of the Attorney General during the lengthy run up to consolidating several federal police elements into a combined Federal Police force. Early during the Calderon administration, Public Security Secretary Garcia Luna (who ran AFI during the Fox administration) pulled much of the organization's leadership, and some units such as the anti-kidnapping operation, into SSP as a first step in the reorganization. Most rank and file investigators, however, remained in PGR. Under the reorganization plan, these are slated to be moved over to SSP when legislative authority exists.

¶3. (C) However, the slow pace of the reorganization has taken its toll, according to Oscar Rocha, a special advisor to Mexico's Attorney General (Protect). The Calderon administration sought congressional approval for consolidation in the spring of 2007. The initiative then was bundled with broader legal reform effort. During the year and a half it has taken Congress to enact the necessary constitutional changes and prepare secondary enabling legislation, a rift has developed between those cops remaining at PGR, and the AFI elements who have already migrated to SSP. The latter (sometimes characterized as the best and brightest who Garcia Luna took with him) believe that the working level cops in PGR are tainted by corruption, ineffectual and may not be suitable for the investigative functions that SSP/PF is supposed to take on, said Rocha.

¶4. (SBU) For their part, those who remain at PGR distrust

their former colleagues and superiors, and look down on the less educated Federal Police elements with whom they will be working. AFI investigators are required to have a Bachelor's degree, while Federal Police generally have high school diplomas only. AFI agents fear they will be treated unfairly by SSP colleagues and commanders. Hector Sanchez, from SSP's International Affairs division, confirmed to the Embassy DHS Attache that perennial distrust between SSP and PGR elements has deepened in recent months. Another SSP official told us that many of the latter will lose seniority when folded into a reorganized Federal Police, but two senior SSP officials met with leaders of the AFI protests on October 1 to assure them that they would retain their rank when consolidated into a combined federal force. The leaders told reporters they were skeptical and said they remain fearful of mass layoffs.

¶5. (SBU) Other contacts with whom we spoke say that many of the demonstrators last week advanced more specific grievances over pay and leave, and that some were about to be fired with cause. We have not been able to substantiate these assertions.

¶6. (U) The Calderon administration is now working with Congress to pass broad security legislation passed, some of which will set the terms of reorganization in motion. However, in recent weeks Mexico's opposition parties have sharpened their positions on security issues. Both PRD and PRI have said they will advance alternative legislation to promote police reforms. PRI Chamber of Deputies leader Emilio Gamboa told poloffs on September 28 that his party will introduce its own initiative. (Manlio Fabio Beltrones, PRI's

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Senate leader, after meeting with Calderon on September 26, said his party would support any reform that lead to better coordination among police forces at all levels here. He did not say, however, his party would support the President's proposals as they stand. PRI is unveiling its reform package on October 3, say party insiders.)

¶7. (SBU) Rocha says AFI cops still at PGR may have spotted an opportunity to mount public pressure against consolidation at a time when Calderon's crime-fighting strategy is under fire. "They're acting like any good police union would in defending their interests," said Rocha.

¶8. (C) Comment: While Rocha discounted widespread rumors that animosity and mutual suspicion between his boss and SSP's Garcia Luna was complicating police reorganization, he did say that PGR had an interest in retaining some kind of investigative capacity after reorganization is complete. Rocha and other senior PGR contacts with whom we have spoken say that reorganization will go forward with their institution's support. However, it is clear that senior PGR officials have their own institutional perspective and are working the issue. PRI's Gamboa told poloffs that his party's deputies were engaged with the institution to seek its perspective on reform (Reftel). We will be providing further reporting on police reform in Congress as it evolves. Garza

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